

CHANGING DYNAMICS OF TURKEY'S U.S. AND EU RELATIONS

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One of the greatest challenges to Turkey's foreign policy in the post-Iraq War era concerns the changing dynamics of Turkey-EU relations. In analyzing them, one needs to take into consideration that the dynamics of Turkey-U.S. and U.S.-EU relations have also been exposed to significant challenges in the aftermath of the war. First, from now on, Turkey's relevance to the United States will be dependent less on Turkey's military capabilities and geostrategic location, as used to be the case, and more on its identity. If the Americans were seriously committed to nation-building in predominantly Muslim societies, particularly those possessing the potential to nurture global terrorism, then Turkey's ideational and civilizational position would matter a lot. The true inclusion of a predominantly Muslim country in the community of developed liberal-democratic states would certainly strengthen the soft power of the United States in its fight against global terror. However, the degree of Turkey's attractiveness for American policy would increase if Turkey could solve its external and internal (mainly radical Islamist and separatist Kurdish movements) security

problems through domestic pluralization and liberalization and thus reach a more stable relationship with the European Union. Such a Turkey would not only feel more self-confident but less burdened by its unbalanced relations with the United States. Second, it seems that there is now a serious crisis of confidence between the parties, mainly stemming from their divergent security interests. Third, the gradual drifting apart of the United States and the European Union in terms of their geopolitical priorities and assessment of security threats¹ will likely affect the tone of Turkey's relations with Europe. The important questions are how the EU Defense and Security Policy will evolve and how it will relate to NATO's own transformation. The greater the convergence of these two processes and the more the United States and the EU view threats to their national security in similar terms, the easier it will be for Turkey to cooperate with the West. Turkey might find it difficult to synchronize its policies towards the EU and the United States, particularly if Turkey is exposed to diverging demands from each.

For example, Turkey's room for maneuver in northern Iraq will be seriously

constrained by possible U.S. and EU concerns. The United States would not want Turkey to have a clear mandate to undertake security operations, for this would likely pit Turkey against the new regime in Baghdad as well as the pro-American Kurdish groups in the north. Turkey would also be constrained by the European Union, which might ask Ankara to synchronize its foreign-policy preferences and strategies with those of the EU in order to join the union.² Turkey will be increasingly exposed to European calls to cope with its security problems through "politicization" and "de-securitization."³

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A related factor in this regard would concern Turkey's increasing need to become a part of the European Union in the face of strained relations with the United States. A simultaneous process of estrangement from both the EU and the United States would radically militate against Turkey's ability to shape developments in the region. What is significant in this regard concerns the fact that the legitimacy of the Europeanization efforts of the Justice and Development party since its accession to power in late 2002 has increased according to public-opinion surveys, due to the fact that the allegedly pro-American forces in Turkey, mainly the army, did not play constructive roles in the management of bilateral relations on the eve of the Iraqi crisis. That Turkish-American relations have soured over Iraq is seen by quite a number of people in Turkey as the failure of the army to sincerely support the government's policies.⁴

Turkey's need to become further integrated into the EU seems to have increased since the Iraq war. For one thing,

Turkey would eventually be able to assess the EU's commitment towards its membership only in this way. Unless Turkey met the accession criteria first, it would be a fruitless discussion whether the EU is biased towards Turkey's membership.

In addition, Turkey can cope with the security challenges and risks of globalization in the most effective and efficient way by integrating with the global community through the EU accession process.⁵ To prevent dismemberment through globalization (the most important security threat Turkey faces), the safest strategy for Turkey is to evolve into a liberal-pluralistic society as part of the integration process with the EU. Europeanization as a globalization strategy would be regarded in Turkey as legitimate, for this process would also bring Turkey closer to its Western/European identity. Second, Turkey would become more able to deal with the fragmenting effects of globalization, simply because the EU accession process has never resulted in the dismemberment of any country aspiring to join the Union. If it is sure that the concept of security would be rewritten in such a way that threats to individual and societal needs are far more important than the threats to sovereignty and territorial integrity of nation-states, Turkey can better transform its security understanding by trying to meet the EU's accession criteria, for the EU's conception of security clearly shapes these criteria. Third, Turkey would hardly be able to integrate with the global economy without remaining in the EU accession process. It is quite likely that foreign investors will not come to Turkey unless Turkey gets stabilized and gives the impression that it belongs to the Western world. The shortest and soundest way to realize this is through

Turkey's march to Brussels.⁶

Fourth, democratization within the context of the EU accession process is the best route for a country such as Turkey. Democratization within the Europeanization process offers the most important incentives for both external and domestic actors to undertake reforms. Fifth, Turkey would also increase its bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States by increasing the quality of its relations with the European Union. Given that the degree of U.S.-Turkey interdependency is highly skewed in favor of the United States, a weak and non-Europeanizing Turkey would not be able to stand up to American demands. The more balanced interdependent EU-Turkey relations would serve Turkey's interests better.⁷ The only way for Turkey to develop a healthy and equal relationship with the United States is through Turkey's membership in the EU. For this to happen Turkey has to become more Europeanized and adopt the EU's more non-realpolitik security identity. Otherwise Turkey's dependency on the United States would be increased, and Washington would likely find dealing with Turkey more difficult.

If Turkey is to increase both its hard and soft power in the age of war against global terrorism, membership in the EU would help. For the Turkish model to be attractive to other Turkic and Muslim states, Turkey's modernization process should successfully pass through the stage of liberal-pluralistic democracy practiced within the EU. Any kind of bridge role for Turkey between the Muslim East and the Christian West would be unsustainable; Turkey's ambiguous identity status would neither free the country of further risks of global terrorist attacks nor move the Europeans to wholeheartedly promote its

membership. For Turkey's secular democracy to be attractive to others, it needs to be reconstituted.⁸

The strange, and fortunate, thing is that the need of the EU to seek a better and firmer relationship with Turkey has also increased in this new era. It has become clear that the European Union cannot be a significant security actor in the region without the membership of a Europeanized Turkey.⁹ The current dynamics of global and regional geopolitics would dictate a concerted European commitment first to Turkey's transformation along the lines of the EU's security culture and then its full membership in the EU. It would be a great mistake on the part of the EU to hope that Turkey would continue to cooperate with the EU on security issues, particularly in the Greater Middle Eastern region, even if the EU did not radically change its old "constructively managed deliberate ambiguity" policy towards Turkey. The latest Cyprus crisis has clearly demonstrated this. Turkey has hesitated to cooperate with the EU regarding the EU membership of Cyprus as an undivided island before feeling confident of the EU's commitment to its own membership.¹⁰

There are reasons for the European Union to upgrade the level of its relations with Turkey now. First, if the EU wants to see its security interests preserved and its security model applied to the global struggle with terrorism, then Turkey's incorporation into the EU family is highly significant. Given that the sources of global terrorism mainly originate from the Middle East, Turkey's inclusion within the EU would enable the latter to rely on Turkey's advanced military capabilities in its struggle against such threats. Second, Turkey's membership in the EU would bolster the

claims of those who argue that the war on terrorism should not be continued on the basis of a clash of civilizations between the developed Christian North and the underdeveloped Muslim South.¹¹ Moreover, Turkey's EU membership would also imply that it is not predestined for a country whose population is overwhelmingly Muslim, and whose economic power lags far behind those of the developed countries, to be barred from the EU, currently a Christian club of developed European states.

The November blasts in Istanbul seem to have once again brought to the attention of the Europeans the question of Turkey's status vis-à-vis the EU. The way the EU from now on handles Turkey's membership process will likely reveal one of two things. The EU might decide to deal with the global terrorist threat emanating from al-Qaeda and its affiliates by trying to keep its distance from the Muslim world and the so-called zone of danger in the Middle East through the exclusion of Turkey from the EU's zone of peace. Under this scenario, the EU will continue to see Turkey as a barrier against the global threats of terrorism and WMD. In this scenario, the EU would also assume that if it disengages from the global security environment and does not participate in the U.S.-led war on terror, then it will be more secure. But the EU might see Turkey's membership as a great asset in terms of the success of its own model of security management in both Europe and the global arena. The inclusion of Turkey would vindicate the fundamental norms of the European Union that international terrorists would like to tarnish. The EU's multicultural and post-nationalist framework might serve as a better formula for the civilizational conflicts likely to emanate from the clash of the "West and

the Rest." Turkey's accession process offers the Europeans a real chance to solve this dilemma once and for all.¹² Thought of this way, leaving Turkey outside the EU and treating it as a buffer against both soft and hard security threats will not work anymore. Security issues in this part of the world have become globalized.

It seems that there is a close relationship between Turkey's EU accession process and the EU's security perception. The further Turkey's domestic structuring departs from that of the EU, the more turbulence and chaos will probably occur inside the country. The more internal instability roils Turkey, the less secure the EU will likely feel because the kinds of security threats the EU is trying to eliminate would abound. If mass migration, domestic instability, the flow of refugees to Europe and the possibility of civil wars are referred to by Europeans as among the future threats to EU security, then it would be an irrational act on the part of EU members to stir up the domestic order in Turkey. The EU would be confronted with grave security risks whose scope and impact would be felt much more profoundly than were the wars in the territories of the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. In the short run, Turkey's ongoing transformation process toward EU accession serves EU security interests by strengthening directly Turkey's and indirectly the EU's soft security identities. In the long run, Turkey's accession to the EU will help the latter realize both its hard and soft security interests. Turkey's membership would accelerate the transformation of the EU into a global security actor endowed with the capability to define the security parameters in the Greater Middle East.

If the transatlantic rift between the EU

and the United States further widens¹³ in the years to come, Turkey's significance vis-à-vis the European Union will grow. The membership of a Europeanized Turkey would help the EU face the United States in a more confident manner around the globe. After all, what would be at stake is the promise of the EU's security model. If Turkey were included in the U.S. model, it would be more difficult for EU members both to sustain their model of security in Europe and to transfer it to the periphery of the continent. In the long run, this would contribute to the erosion of the EU's sense of security. On the other hand, if EU members increasingly believe that partnership with the United States would prove more beneficial for the EU than rivalry, the membership of a Europeanized Turkey would also hold more advantages than disadvantages. By incorporating such a Turkey into its midst, the EU countries would give the United States the signal that the EU is contributing to the stabilization of the continent and is willing to help the U.S. concentrate its energy on other problematic areas of the globe, such as Central and East Asia. In fact, this is the prevailing logic behind the American efforts to support Turkey's accession to the Union.¹⁴

All in all, in this new era, it is going to be more difficult for Turkey to formulate and implement foreign policies independent of the dynamics of its relations with the EU. How would Turkey dare to disregard the organizing and constitutive principles of EU foreign, defense and security policies on the one hand and the main geopolitical interests of the major EU members on the other, while aspiring to join the EU? Turkey's non-EU-oriented foreign policy will gradually become an impossibility as its external and internal security interests

remain to a great extent dependent on how the EU accession process unfolds.¹⁵

A recent example of the impact of the EU on Turkey's foreign and security policies involved the question of Cyprus's EU membership. The Justice and Development party has openly disputed well-established Turkish foreign-policy practices over the Cyprus dispute. While the government has seen the EU membership prospects of Cyprus as a significant opportunity before both the solution of the dispute and Turkey's own EU membership process, the elites have interpreted the Europeanization of the Turkish-Greek disputes in general and the Cyprus dispute in particular as well-articulated Greek and European machinations against Turkey.¹⁶ To them, the Cyprus dispute would constitute a good excuse for the Europeans to permanently delay Turkey's accession to the EU.

It is within this context that the government has tended to interpret the EU's latest strategy paper, issued in November 2003, in a positive manner. They appear to believe that the real reason the EU has seen the non-resolution of the Cyprus dispute as a great obstacle to setting a clear date for the start of Turkey's accession talks relates to the fact that EU bureaucrats are realistic about the possible hardships that both Greek Cypriots and Greeks might create. To government circles, the EU Commission is trying to convince a skeptical European public opinion of the appropriateness of Turkey's membership by working for the emergence of positive images of Turkey. To them, if the Cyprus dispute gets resolved by Turkey's constructive attitude, which they hope will take place as part of Turkey's accession process, then Turkey's image in Europe would greatly improve.

NEW SECURITY UNDERSTANDING

Just as it is gradually becoming a necessity on the part of the European Union to offer Turkey more credible membership prospects in order to ensure cooperation on issues of security, the Turkish political-military elites have also started to internalize the idea that if Turkey wants to feel secure it needs, first of all, to put its house in order along the lines of pluralist-liberalism, as articulated within the EU. In view of today's diffuse global threats to security, the elites have started to argue more openly for a redefinition of Turkey's security understanding. For Turkey to feel exempt from the dangers that might come from outside its borders, particularly Iraq, a reorganization and restructuring of domestic politics, as well as state-society relations, should be undertaken. What is interesting in this regard is the emergence of two particular groups in Turkey, each with diverging assumptions and blueprints in regard to EU-Turkey relations. Their definitions of Turkey's security ends and means will to an important degree be linked to how they conceptualize Turkey's relations with the EU.¹⁷ While the Euro-sceptics argue that Turkey's EU accession process threatens Turkey's security, or at least the main premises of the Kemalist security understanding, the pro-EU circles argue for further integration because this would be the only way to achieve security.

The post-Iraq war era has made it once again clear that Turkey's external and domestic politics are becoming increasingly intertwined. Just as the political status of the Kurdish groups in northern Iraq will have an impact on Turkey's policies towards its own Kurds, the way Turkey deals with its Kurdish problem will also affect

Turkey's attitude towards the Kurds of northern Iraq. Given that the political status of Turkey's Kurdish-origin citizens is an issue of high concern, if a solution cannot be found that would satisfy all the parties, Turkey would likely continue to securitize the political developments outside its borders in which the Kurds are involved.¹⁸

One significant myth of Turkey's foreign policy towards Iraq has been that Turkey's national interests in northern Iraq would be best preserved by the suppression of the Kurds there and the strengthening of the Turkoman community to counterbalance the Kurds. It has been within this context that Turkey has intermittently tried to prevent the main Kurdish political groups in the region, the KDP and the PUK, from becoming powerful enough to challenge the territorial integrity of Iraq. The Kurds have always been seen as potential sources of instability in the region as well as in Turkey itself. They have been thought of as master-minding grandiose plans first to break up Iraq and establish their own independent state and then to carve out Turkey's Kurd-dominated regions.¹⁹ It has been in line with this spirit that Turkey did not want to let the Americans open a second front in northern Iraq in the latest war. The fear was that the Kurds would take this as an opportunity to establish their own state.

Turkey's realities, however, should have dictated a different logic. The fact that nearly 10-15 million of Turkey's citizens are of Kurdish origin should have led the Turkish elite to consider the Kurds of northern Iraq as the relatives of Turkey's people. If the Turkoman community in Iraq were seen by the Turkish elite as true relatives, despite their marginal and disputed numbers, the Kurds should have quite naturally been seen through the same

lenses. Their numbers and political status in the region outweigh those of the Turkomans. Given that the Kurds are also seen through sympathetic eyes in the Western international community, Turkey should have promoted closer relations with the Kurds as much as possible.

The failure of Turkey to establish cordial and cooperative relations with the Kurds of northern Iraq, as well as with its own Kurdish population, will likely engender unsavory outcomes in the years ahead. Now, while the Kurds are treated as the staunchest allies of the Americans in the region, Turkey is being denied any influential role in the reconstruction of Iraq.

CONCLUSIONS

Before putting any realistic course of action in front of Turkey's current and future leaders, it should be underscored that the three characteristic premises of Turkey's security culture are no longer valid in today's global and regional environment. There is no unified West today, nor does the geopolitical and geostrategic significance of Turkey remain unquestioned. Nor can the optimum level of security be achieved by putting the state before the society as the most significant security referent. The practices of exclusion, suppression and military force are no longer the ideal means for dealing with today's security threats.

If the Turkish political and state elites seriously want Turkey to feel secure in the years ahead, particularly from threats outside of the Middle East and from the dynamics of bilateral relations with the United States and the European Union, they should explore how to conceptualize Turkey's security threats and how to cope with them. Being aware of the close

relationship between foreign and domestic developments, they should soon come to a collective understanding that Turkey will no longer be able to define its security on the basis of state sovereignty and territorial integrity. If societal needs are not met, the state as an entity will always be exposed to challenges from various domestic groups, be they Kurds or political Islamists.

The ongoing accession process with the EU would contribute to Turkey's sense of security through the transformation of Turkey's structural conditions in line with the European Union. A Turkey that has finally reached satisfying state-society relations and become more Europeanized through the EU accession process will become more able to stand as a significant country in its region, with a recognized ability to determine the dynamics of regional politics. If Turkey oscillates between becoming more Europeanized and turning inward, not only will its ability to stand up to European and American demands gradually wane but Turkey will not be able to develop healthy cooperative relations with the United States.

Turkey will preserve its influential position in the region only if the Turkish elite both successfully restructures Turkey's state-society relations along European models and cooperates with, rather than challenges, the United States.

The worst outcome for Turkey would be for its prospects for EU membership to falter because of its domestic performance in the EU-oriented reformation process, while the quality of US-Turkey strategic relations also declined. In such a case, Turkey's marginalization in the region would likely increase and the internal political arena would be dominated by continuous struggle between the EU-oriented JDP and

the nationalist-secularist establishment.
Under such conditions, Turkey might fall

into internal chaos, its hopes for development and Europeanization seriously dashed.

¹ Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, 2002, <http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html>.

² For example, the leading figures of the European Union have asked Turkey not to deploy its military units in northern Iraq if the latter wants its accession process to proceed smoothly. See Aktan Gunduz, "Problem with Europe," *Turkish Daily News*, March 29, 2003.

³ On these concepts, see Ole Wæver, "Integration as Security: Constructing a Europe at Peace," *Atlantic Security Contending Visions*, ed. Charles A. Kupchan (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998), pp. 45-63; Ole Wæver, "The EU As A Security Actor: Reflections from a Pessimistic Constructivist on Post-sovereign Security Order," *Foreign and Security Policy in the European Union*, ed. Kjell A. Eliassen (London: Sage Publications, 1998), pp. 250-288; Ole Wæver, "Insecurity, Security, and Asecurity in the West European Non-war Community," *Security Communities*, eds. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 69-118.

⁴ Ziya Onis and Suihnaz Yilmaz, "Turkey-EU-US Triangle in Perspective: Transformation or Continuity," 2003, <http://home.ku.edu.tr/~zonis/ONIS-YILMAZ-TURKEY-EU-US%20TRIANGLE.pdf>.

⁵ Ali L. Karaosmanoglu, "Globalisation and Its Impact on Turkey's Security Strategies," paper submitted to the upcoming international conference *Globalisation and Security*, May 29-30, 2003.

⁶ Fiat and Mercedes Benz, have recently applied to bring their regional headquarters and plants to Turkey following the government's decision to let foreign nationals set up businesses there.

⁷ Muhittin Ataman, *The US-EU Rivalry in the Middle East: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy*, paper to be presented at the METU Second International Conference, organized by the Middle East Technical University, June 23-25, 2003.

⁸ Omer Taspinar, "An Uneven Fit? The 'Turkish Model' and the Arab World: U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World," The Brookings Institution Analysis Paper #5, August 2003, <http://www.brookings.org/fp/saban/taspinar20030801.pdf>.

⁹ Ersin Kalaycioglu, "Turkey's Choice: The Road Away from the European Union?" *Turkey: The Road Ahead*, ed. Bertil Duner (Stockholm: The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2002), pp. 119-135; Bertil Duner, "Why Let Turkey in?" *Turkey: The Road Ahead*, pp. 134-148. See also Kalypso Nikolaydis and Gilles Bertrand, "Avrupa Icin Turklere Evet," *Radikal*, May 13, 2003.

¹⁰ Semic Suvarierol, "The Cyprus Obstacle on Turkey's Road to Membership in the European Union," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003, pp. 55-78; Pinar Tank, "'Re-solving' the Cyprus Problem: Changing Perceptions of State and Societal Security," *European Security*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2002, pp. 146-164; Nathali Tocci, "Cyprus and the European Union Accession Process: Inspiration for Peace in Incentive for Crisis?," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2002, pp. 104-138.

¹¹ This consideration is highly relevant for the EU members due to the existence of substantial numbers of Muslim people residing in Europe.

¹² Oliver P. Richmond, "Emerging Concepts of Security in the European Order: Implications for 'Zones of Conflict' at the Fringes of the EU," *European Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2000, pp. 41-67.

¹³ Robert Kagan, op. cit.

¹⁴ Bruce Kuniholm, "Turkey's Accession to the European Union: Differences in European and US Attitudes, and Challenges for Turkey," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2001, pp. 25-53.

¹⁵ H. T. Oguzlu, "The Impact of 'Democratisation along the EU Accession Process' on Turkish Foreign Policy," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2004 (forthcoming).

¹⁶ Ziya Onis and E. Fuat Keyman, "A New Path Emerges," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2003, pp. 95-107; Soli Ozel, "After The Tsunami," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2003, pp. 80-94.

¹⁷ Oguzlu, "How To Interpret Turkey's Accession Process with the European Union: A Clash of Discourses," *Perceptions*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2003, pp. 51-83.

¹⁸ Dogu Ergil, "Identity Crisis and Political Instability in Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2000, pp. 43-20; Michael Gunter, "The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Ocalan's Capture," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 5, 2000, pp. 849-869.

¹⁹ Gareth R.V. Stansfield, "The Kurdish Dilemma: The Golden Era Threatened," *Iraq at the Crossroads: State in the Shadow of Regime Change*, eds. Toby Dodge and Steven Simon (Adelphi Papers, 2003), pp. 354, 131-147.